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23 MAR 1979

MEMORANDUM FOR: Deputy Director for Support

SUBJECT : Communications

Jack:

Here are some thoughts we have had here concerning your forthcoming memorandum to the Director on communications.

We have discussed this subject at great length and are in agreement that basic communications will not be greatly improved within the Agency by the establishment of artificial gimmicks: the creation of special boards and panels, task forces, various kinds of news letters, etc. These can often help and certainly the inclusion of young people in the deliberations of many of our formal committees and boards is a good thing; but the real problem in communicating, it seems to me, rests with the posture of leadership from the top on down to the closest supervisor.

It seems to be a matter of skill or the lack of it in interpersonal relations that obstructs so much of what we are trying to say to our people. This is especially vital at the lower echelons. Often enough, first-line supervisors are there because of their technical abilities; many are completely inept in terms of relating on a human plane to their subordinates. This would certainly be an educative process, but perhaps Agency management has not placed enough emphasis or enough pressure on the middle echelons to make this factor in leadership of vital importance there. If people can be talked to on a regular basis by their immediate bosses as individuals, if the why as well as the what and how is explained to them as patiently and thoughtfully as a firm and understanding supervisor can do this, if they are kept busy, if they are told how their jobs fits into the overall scheme of things, and if the supervisor is as willing to listen as he is to talk, then perhaps the subject of communications as such would not be a problem at all.

I just feel that we have not concentrated enough on this single element nor have we brought enough pressure to bear from the top on down to make all segments of the Agency's leadership constantly and painfully aware of this need. In the fitness reporting of supervisors, for example, it is required that the rater make mention of the individual's supervisory skills (with no elaboration of the skills) and his cost consciousness. Perhaps supervisors should be rated on their skills in interpersonal relations with evidence of their presence or absence.

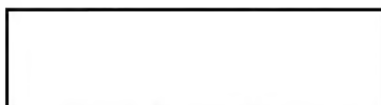
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It is true that information that is passed downward through staff meeting channels ultimately gets filtered to the point where very little meaningful information is passed on to the employees. Past attitude surveys, including the January 1970 report of the Inspector General, demonstrate that the Agency is perhaps weakest in the area of visibility between the employees and management and full exchange relative to their respective concerns and intentions. Actions affecting the welfare of individuals, e.g., cutbacks, retirement policies and rankings, are unexplained or ill-explained. When management fails to explain its actions, they will be interpreted negatively by those who feel threatened by them. This, of course, refers to the why as well as to the what and how mentioned above.

One last thing, we should not forget the need to communicate more adequately with the midcareer personnel as well as our young personnel. We should consciously seek to emphasize that the Agency is a good place to be, for example, not a good place to get out of. Direct and indirect pressures on employees and emphasis on the benefits of retirement have created almost an obsession that seems to be permeating the middle and lower ranks of Agency personnel. I feel that our unusual preoccupation with retirement will have long-range adverse effects on the mental outlook of our young careerists. I believe we should consciously seek to reverse the growing feeling that the Agency's main interest in its middle and older employees is to get them to retire.



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Director of Personnel

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